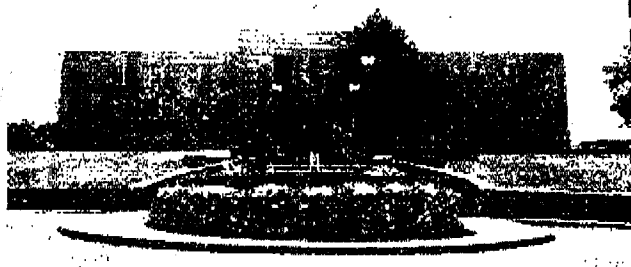


Allan Underdal,  
Commission Chairman  
Dave Miller,  
Commissioner  
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# COUNTY OF TOOLE

226 1<sup>ST</sup> Street South  
Toole County Courthouse, Shelby, MT 59474

**Date:** January 30, 2009

**To:** Senate Energy & Telecommunications Committee, Senator Jerry Black, Chairman

**From:** Toole County Commissioners

**Subject:** Montana's permitting process for companies seeking to build transmission lines, coal generation facilities, and other projects requiring State and Federal approval.

We would like to discuss with you the lengthy process that results when a company is seeking to build a transmission line in Montana. The MATL Line, which is a proposed transmission line from Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada to Great Falls, has been on the drawing board for several years now. We were first contacted by a firm called Rocky Mountain Power LTD. based out of Calgary, Alberta, in April of 2004 seeking a route into Montana. Rocky Mountain Power, LTD. was subsequently acquired by Tonbridge Power, Inc. of Toronto, Canada and the project became known as MATL. MATL has finally received permitting from the State of Montana and the Federal authorities on the US side as well as from the Canadian governments. Construction cannot begin, however, because they are now in an appeal process.

As it worked out, MATL will not run through Toole County, so does not directly affect us for tax base. Indirectly, it significantly affects Toole and other adjoining counties of North/Central Montana, as construction of proposed wind farms that will be using the transmission capacity of MATL are held up or could be put in jeopardy. These wind farms will be investing over 1.5 billion dollars into North/Central Montana developing safe, clean, and green renewable energy. We agree that new development should go through a rigorous process that considers all aspects of a proposed project and protects the public and environment. We think that the current process is flawed, however, and needs to be streamlined so that it addresses legitimate concerns but does not go on indefinitely. We would wholeheartedly support legislation that will improve the permitting process, providing a more reasonable and fair approach for all concerned.

Respectfully,

*Allan Underdal*

Allan Underdal, Chairman  
Toole County Commission